
THE LAY-MAN'S MAGAZINE.

"THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND—AND THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF."

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Every new enterprise in which man engages, should be preceded by looking to God for his blessing—Therefore, in the commencement of these our labors, we pray,

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most precious favor, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy name; and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord—Amen.

We live in astonishing times. Revolution after revolution stalks across our field of vision. The very elements of society seem in wild uproar. The pillars of ancient kingdoms totter to their fall. Empires themselves crumble in the dust. We behold not a few thousands, as in former years, but, millions marshalled to the field of combat. We see the blood of the human family rolling in torrents; we hear the groans of myriads of orphans. The destroying angel is hurling tempest after tempest of desolation across the face of the globe. To just judgment has Omnipotence arisen! He has a controversy with the powers that be—He is visiting for iniquity. He is punishing crime.

Amid all these horrors 'tis delightful to perceive that the sceptre of Immanuel is extending its sway—"When judgments are abroad in the earth the inhabitants thereof learn righteousness." This is now proving. Sensible of their former folly, men are beginning more generally to do their duty to their God. In Christendom a spirit of fervent, active, energetic piety is widely reviving. We behold Bible Societies multiplying throughout two continents. We see

those continents, not only engaged for their own good, but putting forth their hand to help their sisters, Asia and Africa. One consentaneous exertion is making by the soldiers of the Cross in every corner of the world. We presume it not too much to say that more is now doing for the spread of the gospel than has been done at any period during the preceding fifteen hundred years. We know,

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run:

therefore we cannot but hope that the times now passing over us are indications of the great millenium.

Such being the case it must be interesting to all to watch events as they rise, to note them as they pass. Every Christian must delight in observing the progress of the Cross in its march to universal empire.

Our object is to act as heralds of that Cross. To announce to our readers from time to time the state of the spiritual war. We propose when the banner of Immanuel shall be planted amid the ruins of any new conquest—of any newly demolished temple of idolatry—to publish the glad tidings. We wish, as humble followers, to watch "the flight of that angel who has the everlasting gospel to preach"—to declare what new climes have listened to his voice—what new altars have bowed beneath his sway.

"Essays to do good" will from time to time appear in our pages.

We shall also strive to portray the glories of the departing Christian, as we may have opportunity.

Such of the flowers of Castalia as have been sprinkled from the sacred font we shall with pleasure present to our readers.

In the name of the Lord lift we up our banner and commence a crusade against pride, profligacy, lukewarmness and ignorance. May the spirit of grace accompany our progress, and make it effectual to the everlasting salvation of many. Then shall we obtain the reward, and all the reward we seek.

THE EDITOR,

Martinsburgh, Nov. 16, 1815.

WHEN we come forward on the theatre of action and look around us, we find ourselves in a state of toil, trouble and danger. Obligated to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow, we are subject at the same time to all the caprices of disease and of disappointment;—exposed to the surges of passion, the rackings of pain, and finally to tremendous combat with death. We are sure of the possession of no present felicity; and oft, very oft, obliged to labour in vain. The objects of our desire fly from us:—The central subject of our affections—that around which cling our very heart-strings, often vanishes from our grasp; and leaves us mournful, without an aim, without a pleasure. The cold hand of disappointment scatters blighting over all the flowers of every day of our existence, and, as with icy clods, congeals our very spirits.

Thus situated, what have we to cheer us? What are our counterbalancing joys?—The social affections and self love—wealth, pleasure, honor.

We have friends. On them are placed our ardent attachments. They are the very life of our life. With their hearts ours mingle. In passing along our pilgrimage we find them cheerers and consolers. In the flow of soul with them we forget our afflictions and drink deep of the cup of satisfaction. They are a rich source of delight.—But, by a blow of Death's

unfailing arm, our dearest friends lie cold and inanimate—food for worms—the tenants of the clods of the valley: From their eye has fled that expression of soul which spoke joy to ours; from their cheek has faded every tint of freshness;—that hand in which ours has been a thousand times warmly grasped, is stiff and motionless;—from their limbs has vanished agility;—in fine we behold nought but a marble memento of former joy, at sight of which the soul droops in heaviness, and the heart heaves with bursting sighs. Beside, tho' death do not seize them, we are liable by a thousand accidents to lose their friendship. We may be shut out from their society, and thus our joy be lessened rather than increased by their reciprocated love.

We have parents, whose care protects, whose society makes life rich; they may be involved in temporal ruin, and thus, thro' our sympathy, make us miserable:—they may pine on the bed of languishment, and thus stretch our heart-strings on the rack; they may become the prey of death.

Our children, the idols of our affections, are also cropped like the fair flower when just putting forth their bloom; or, if they live, they are liable to accidents and error. They may run with swift step along the broad road to ruin, and hurry both themselves and us to destruction.

But there is a higher joy in that intimate union of souls which binds a wedded pair, so as of twain to make one. Here is a source of pleasure which is valuable indeed—we have a partner on whose bosom to repose amid all the disquietudes of our way; one by whom our sorrows are borne; one who is the helper of our joys;—who strives by the assiduities of love to chase care from our brow;—who culls for us every breathing rose in life's parterre. This is a union worth living for. This is indeed a sweet'ner of existence.—Separation must come,

and it may come soon! This is the alloy. This embitters even the moments of exultation. And when it does come indeed—when we are called to divide our soul, to lay one half of our very heart in the grave, then, oh then, is bitterness anguish and agony: Then we seek the weeping willow and the gloomy grot: Then we delight in the sombre day: We wander in darkness forlorn: We love the shades of midnight and compare them to the color of our fate.

But, we pursue pleasure; we drink the cup of inebriation; we bound along in the dance of delight; our spirits tread a thoughtless mase; all is sparkling all is brilliant and the day of festivity is but the precursor to the night of gaiety; In the words of the high priest of licentiousness—he who is the curse of elegant literature—who has poured poison mingled with fascination throughout almost the whole mass of polished mind in England and America—I mean Thomas Moore—

“We leave our book on pleasure’s bowl,
“And turn the leaf with folly’s feather.”

But bye and bye, our spirits, owing to constant excitement, flag and sink: our constitutions decay; disease takes possession of us; and by a decree, more certain than fate’s, our health, our strength, our gaiety and our reputation are mingled in one promiscuous ruin: existence becomes a burden, and we drag out a wretched gouty life, palsied in appetites both of soul and body.

What tho’ we strike higher and place our chief hopes on intellectual pleasure. Here, indeed, we have more rational ground of increased satisfaction. But the pains of the literary man are proportioned to his joys.—His very occupation cultivates a thousand sensibilities to sorrow which the common dull mind knows not. By rivalry his life may be embittered. By disappointed variety he may be made a misanthrope. The very excess of his intellectual gratifications also will

have a tendency to create a sickness of mind and to make him discontented with the realities of life. Thus his very pleasures like those of dissipation may be said to administer to his pains.

Suppose wealth be our object—sordid aim this, but thousands make it theirs. Wealth disappoints us in the pursuit; fails to satisfy our souls when possessed; and leaves us very often suddenly in life, and always at death. Besides the pursuit of it contracts the social affections; makes a man’s soul barren of generous emotions and luscious gratifications—his heart like the heath in which neither flowers nor fruits will grow.

We climb the ladder of ambition, full of anxiety, toiling at every step, and ninety nine times out of a hundred we fall.

Thus our social affections, considered in themselves, are to us, depraved creatures, but sources of woe: our self-love, by meeting ten thousand rebuffs embitters our existence—our eagerness for wealth, for honor, for pleasure, but drinks up our spirits and destroys our souls.

More dreadful than all these tho’, we have death to encounter; that terrible enemy, the thought of whom fills with forebodings, whose touch is the climax of horrors. We feel that beyond the grave we must live again, and how there we shall be situated, whether in happiness or misery, is an awful doubt: clouds and darkness rest upon it: Deepening shades invest our farthest ken. Amid all this who can comfort us? can wealth? can friends? can fame? What comfort had the wise men of antiquity? Hear one of the greatest of them, Aristotle, say, “in pollution I was born: anxious I have lived: doubting I die: Oh thou cause of causes pity me!”

Where then, child of mortality! where wilt thou look for comfort? What can console thee under pains,

disappointments and sorrows? What can brighten the eye of thy affliction and robe the brow of death with light and glory?

THE BIBLE,

Yes here is the fount of joy; the spring of delight; exuberance of consolations. Here flow rills from those rivers of pleasure at God's right hand. Man, come here, take comfort! take healing! take strength! take life eternal!—Sublimated in thy views, thou shalt forget the ills of thy pilgrimage. Celestial in thy affections, thou shalt soar above disappointment. An heir of Heaven, thou canst never be poor. A child of Omnipotence thou canst never suffer. Here, here is the value of human existence—the grand alchymy which shall transmute every thing into gold. Here grow perennial flowers. Here flourish fruits for the seraphim. Here is converse with angels. Here is communion with God.

Thro' this divine word we soar in the scale of existence. By it eternity is made to spread its vast before us, to evolve its wonders: We behold it with the eye of intelligence: We see its secrets: No more gloom bounds our prospect; but light, life and glory burst together upon our view. A blaze of effulgence pours around us, and we forget this world in the hope of another.

The following letter was written by a young lady who now receives the praises of the guardians of literature of our land, as an author. It breathes so pure a spirit of piety that we present it to our female readers with a view to their benefit. We do it also with a prayer that they, like its author, may adorn the doctrine of God, their Saviour, in all things.

As our evangelical correspondent did not intend this for the public eye, we might, even tho' she is far distant from us, ask her pardon for thus bringing it forward, but we know the paramount desire of her soul is the glory of her God, and we know not how she can more effectually gratify that desire than by presenting

the effusions of her mind and heart to the contemplation of the world.

The termination of your past journey gave me pleasure, for I have known enough of the heart of a stranger to rejoice when one finds his home. It is painful to wander long where we have little interest, and still less enjoyment, where we see only new countenances, and study them for traces of congeniality or of piety, often seeking vainly, and ever feeling as an isolated being whose bands of consanguinity are loosed. But we forget that we have ever suffered, when we view again the spot of our nativity, the roof of our paternal abode, the friends whose felicity is interwoven with our own. We feel the emotions elevated but tranquilized, and the soul secretly bearing incense to Him, who has guided our footsteps, and strengthened us, even when we knew it not. In wanderings either transient or protracted we realize forcibly our dependance upon a greater Being. We are exposed to dangers, and he preserves us—wearied, and he refreshes us—separated from friends, and he comforts us. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are but dust:—and as a father pitieth his children, so he pitieth them that fear him."

Your account of the Philadelphia Evangelical Society, afforded me much satisfaction. Many of our large cities display charitable institutions, and asylums for affliction, on the plan of Him who went about doing good. How happy to spend a life in piously relieving misery, and diffusing joy; shedding like an angel gifts of beneficence among men, and then ascending where goodness is known and rewarded.

I rejoice with you at the intelligence of religious revivals and the pouring forth of the spirit. Who that experiences the efficacy of our most holy religion, can be indifferent to the spiritual return of those who were

as strangers and aliens from their God, treading wildly in the crooked paths of the world? Let us entreat to be more earnestly desirous of the glory of Him who is manifesting himself in the churches, to be more conformable to his will, and to bear more evidently the seal of his spirit. The days in which we live are dark and portentous, few can understand the signs of the times, but the rapid fulfilment of prophecy points us to the incontrovertible truth of Scripture, and the firm foundation of our faith. The charge to every one who enlists under the banner of the Cross, seems to be for firmness—for resolution—for activity—for the girding on of the whole armour of God. The enmity which he encounters who would live above the world, discourages the faint-hearted, and him who is only, "*almost a christian*," but to every true follower of Jesus Christ the voice of the Almighty commands—"be thou faithful unto death"—and promises—"I will give thee a crown of life."

Of the spiritual state of my native place, I am not suffered to give you a pleasing account. Some decline from the good path, many slumber and sleep, none appear deeply impressed with the things that belong to their everlasting peace. Yet we do not despond, for we are in the hands of one who at first called light from Chaos, and who is able to illuminate darkness, and to waken stupidity.—The effusions of the spirit are his, and he has promised to give them to those who ask him; though he might have rejected our whole race, and should he even now enter strictly into judgment, every tongue must be mute, and every soul guilty before him.

Have you met with the life and writings of Martha Laurens Ramsay, late of Charleston, (South Carolina?) To me it has been a new work, and inexpressibly interesting. Its pages

have shewn me another saint walking firmly in the steps of our Saviour, amidst the gaieties of youth, and the cares of maturity; now meekly bearing prosperity, now patiently supporting adversity, and by all her earthly changes, purified and made white, until finally, we trust, her robes have been rendered spotless in the blood of the Lamb. But if you have read this, my encomiums are unnecessary; and if you have not, I would not influence your judgment. Accept my best wishes that you may walk like the high priest of our profession, and eventually enter those mansions which he has purchased that his faithful and weary servants might obtain unbroken rest.

Your friend in the fellowship of the gospel.

THE COTTAGER'S WIFE.

"The short and simple annals of the poor."

PART I.

"To the poor," said our Lord, when questioned as to his divine mission, "is the Gospel preached." The "common people," too, we are told by one of the Evangelists, heard our Saviour "gladly." St. Paul declares,* that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." And St. James asks, whether it is not notorious, that God hath "chosen the *poor* of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" The subsequent history of the Church of Christ presents a similar testimony. To the poor the Gospel has still been preached, and by them it has, in general, been most favourably received. Amongst this humble class, some of the most striking instances of the power and grace of Christ have been exhibited; and by them have the

* 1 Cor. i. 16.

rich blessing of his Gospel been frequently most highly prized, and most purely enjoyed.

In adding another proof of the truth of these remarks, from an example which lately fell under my own observation, my only motives are to display the glory of the Redeemer, and the excellency of the Gospel; and to draw from a simple statement of facts, a few plain but important lessons of instruction and consolation for the benefit of my christian brethren.

I was lately called to undertake the pastoral care of a small parish, in one of the inland counties. My predecessor, now gone to give up his account to the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, was a man of considerable talents and learning; of sincere piety, and most amiable manners. His religious views were not perhaps such as could be considered as thoroughly scriptural; and my respected friend (for such he was) during the latter part of his life, began to perceive their insufficiency. I am not sure, indeed, whether the pressure of this conviction, upon a peculiarly thoughtful and conscientious mind, was not in some degree, the occasion of his premature death. But though the defects in his religious system materially affected his comfort, I cannot but think well of his safety. In his parish, his preaching and private exertions, which were in many respects exemplary, had produced a remarkable degree of regularity and decency of manners among the poor people, of whom it was almost exclusively composed. How far his labours were blessed in producing those genuine and unequivocal fruits of repentance and faith in the hearts of any of his parishioners, which every zealous minister is anxious to perceive, I am as yet scarcely competent to determine. I fear that but little of this kind was effected. Yet in the case of the person of whom I am now about to give you a short account, I

found that my amiable predecessor had certainly been instrumental in doing much real good, both by his sermons, his private instructions, and the books which he had given her.—May not this statement point out the duty of speaking and acting with candour and caution towards those clergymen whose views do not entirely coincide with our own—but who, with inferior light, may if sincerely devoted to Him, be usefully employed, by the great Head of the Church, in the work of the ministry? Let us not judge our brethern; but remember, that however thankful we should be for clearer and more scriptural sentiments than some of them may possess, since our Lord and master does not in any case despise “the day of small things,” we ought not to reject, but receive them, as Christ does, to the glory of God.

I had officiated but once in my parish, when I was told that there was a poor young woman, supposed to be in a decline, who wished to see me. I accordingly took an early opportunity of calling on her. As I reside about two miles from the village, and could have, as yet, but a slight acquaintance with the characters of its inhabitants; I was employed during my walk, in considering in what manner I might be likely to render my visit most profitable to my poor patient. My clerical brethren, and indeed all those who have been in the habit of attending the sick beds, whether of the rich or the poor, will readily enter into the anxiety and perplexity of my thoughts upon such a subject. They will not be surprised, that my expectations as to the actual state of the sick person, were not very favourable; and that I rather feared to find, what is so commonly met with on these occasions, *either great insensibility and unconcern, or a false and ill-grounded satisfaction and confidence in the goodness and safety of her condition.* It is a mel-

anchoy consideration, that there should in general be so much ground for such apprehensions; and whilst it shows the vast importance of a parochial ministry, it may serve to quicken those who are engaged in it to the diligent use of every means of awakening and instructing their flocks. Absorbed in this painful but profitable train of thought, I arrived at the village, and was soon directed, by my clerk's daughter, to one of the smallest cottages I had ever seen. On lifting the latch of this lowly dwelling, I was struck with the remarkable cleanliness and neatness of every part of it. The furniture, though of the humblest kind, was decent and in the most perfect order; and various traces might be perceived of the industry and care of the mistress of this little abode, though she had now been confined for some weeks to her bed. The cottage consisted of but two small rooms, separated by a few stairs or rather steps, which led from the one to the other. I was met, at my entrance, by a pleasing looking elderly woman, holding in her arms an infant, a few months old. "I heard," said I, "that a young woman was ill here, and I have called to see her. Are you her mother?" "I am her husband's mother, sir, and this is her little child. Poor dear babe, he has never known the comfort of his mother, and I am very much afraid he will soon lose her." "I am sorry," said I, "to hear she is so ill. Would she like to see me now, do you think?" "O yes, sir, that I am sure she will." This answer was made in so unusual a tone of confidence and apparent welcome, that I could not help hailing it as a token for good. *How often, alas! are ministers received with a degree of coldness and indifference, in their visits to the sick, which too plainly proves that these labours of love are but slightly valued, if at all desired.*

The reply was no sooner made, than I followed the good woman into the sick room. It was a little apartment formed out of the roof of the cottage, open to the stairs, and without any means of warming it by a fire. The walls were white-washed, and it had one very small casement, which its neat but afflicted tenant had adorned with a little muslin curtain. On a bedstead just raised from the floor, and without any curtain to shelter her from the keen air of winter, lay the poor object of my visit, apparently far advanced in a consumption. — Alas! thought I, "this is but comfortless accommodation for one in such a disorder! How many in the midst of health, would think themselves hardly used, to be obliged to content themselves with such an apartment! Can I ever murmur at any circumstances in my own comparatively favoured lot! Forbid it Lord! and forgive the repining thoughts which have sometimes found admission into my mind. O! make me thankful for my superior blessings; and in whatsoever state I am, let me learn to be therewith content." These and similar thoughts passed rapidly through my mind, as I approached the bedside of my poor parishioner. "M——," said her mother-in-law, "here is the minister come to see you." "I am very glad to see him," was the immediate answer, "and greatly obliged to him for coming so far in this cold weather." "How do you find yourself?" "I am very ill sir, and feel that I am getting weaker every day." "How long have you been ill?" three and twenty weeks, sir: I have never been well since the birth of my poor babe, and I begin to think that I shall never recover." I perceived at once, by the hectic flush upon her cheek, and by the difficulty with which she breathed, that her apprehensions were but too well founded, and therefore determined to lose no time in

examining the state of her mind as to religion. "Your illness" said I, "has indeed been very long, and seems now to be very serious; but this is *the Lord's* doing—it is *He* who has laid you on the bed of sickness; and the length of your confinement has given you a very merciful opportunity of thinking upon religion, and the concerns of your soul. I hope you have improved it." "I have tried to do so, sir." "I am glad to hear you say so—but let me have a little serious conversation with you upon this subject." "That is what I greatly desire, sir." "Religion, you know, should be the great business of our lives, whether in health or sickness, but especially in sickness—and since your state seems very uncertain, let me ask you what you think about it. If it should please God that you should not recover, what hope have you as to another world?" Those who know by painful experience the answers which are commonly made both by the rich and the poor to such a question, will judge of the surprise and pleasure I felt on hearing a very different reply from my afflicted parishioner. In feeble accents, broken and interrupted by her cough and labouring breath, she spoke, as nearly as I can recollect, as follows:—"Sir, I know and acknowledge that I am a poor miserable sinner; a great sinner, sir. I do not mean that I ever committed any heinous crime. I thank God I cannot charge myself with that—but notwithstanding this, I know and feel that I am a very sinful creature. I have endeavoured, sir, during my long illness to call to mind my past life; and as nearly as I can remember, *I have spread all my sins before God*, and earnestly begged his forgiveness through Jesus Christ. I know and believe that he is the only Saviour of sinners—I put my whole trust in him—and I hope I have come to him—I know that he is a merciful

Saviour—but, sir, (and here she burst into tears) "when I reflect upon my vileness and sinfulness, I often fear that he will not receive me—and if Christ should refuse me where shall I go, or what shall I do to be saved?" Many of my readers will anticipate my reply to this affecting but hopeful declaration. I told my poor patient, that I was truly rejoiced to hear what she had just been saying—that the frame of her mind was very much what I wished it to be—and that if she was perfectly sincere in what she had told me, of which indeed, from her whole air and manner, I could have but little doubt, there was much that I could say to comfort her. I said that it was a great satisfaction to me to find that she was convinced of her sinful state and of the necessity of Christ as a Saviour, and assured her, that if she came to him with a sincere and humble faith, there could be no doubt of his willingness to receive her. To confirm this, I read to her several passages of Scripture, particularly, 1 Tim. i. 15; John iii. 16, 17; and vi. 37; and Matt. xi. 28–30; to which she listened with profound and eager attention, and afterwards expressed the encouragement and consolation which they afforded her.

Fearing, however, that what had given me so much pleasure might possibly be at least in part owing to a religious education, or to a *merely nominal acquaintance with religious sentiments and phraseology*, I inquired of my poor parishioner where she had obtained a degree of knowledge in religion, which was unhappily but too seldom met with in visiting sick beds. She told me, that as long ago as she could remember, she had been impressed with the fear of God, and a strong desire to be a true Christian.

The "Cottage's Wife" will be continued in the next Magazine.